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# Layman's Faith:

Being a REVIEW of the

## *Principal Evidences*

Of the TRUTH of the

## CHRISTIAN RELIGION;

Interpers'd with several *Curious Observations.*

*Nullius addictus jurare in verba Magistri.*

*Amicus Socrates, amicus Plato, sed magis amica*

*VERITAS.*



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By a Free-Thinker, and a Christian.

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## Advertisement.

THERE will be publish'd by the same Hand,  
a *COLLECTION* of *Original POEMS*,  
consisting of *Epistles, Essays, Satyrs, Characters,*  
*Descriptions, Odes, Tales, Epigrams, &c.* with great  
Variety of Translations from all the polite Lan-  
guages, ancient and modern, particularly from the  
*Greek*, amongst which will be that of *Oppian's*  
*Cynegeticks, or POEM ON HUNTING*, in 5 Books.







TO THE

*Queen-Regent.*

MADAM,



As we may observe  
to the Honour of  
the Sex of which  
Your Majesty is  
the greatest Ornament, that  
the Female Reign has sel-  
dom

dom failed to be auspicious to the Interests of Religion, by promoting all those public Virtues attending it ; which will ever exalt a Nation, and has never been more distinguishably illustrious than in these Kingdoms ; the following Discourse had the greater Temptation of coming abroad under Your Majesty's most Gracious Administration, and beneath the Auspices of Your Royal Protection.

The Subject is of general Concern, as the present raging

## *The Dedication.* V

ging Infidelity threatens an universal Infection, and Religion calls for all it's Friends to exert themselves in their several Capacities, that the Plague may be stayed. Every honest Endeavour therefore of rescuing Your Majesty's People from so deplorable a Calamity cannot but be agreeable to that common Indulgence and tender Regard Your Majesty has ever express'd for the Public Welfare. To engage Men in a just Obedience to the Law of G O D, is in effect, to secure their Allegi-

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ance to their King and Sovereign.

If the Libertine Principles of the Times should proceed with a proportionable Increase, as they have advanced hitherto, it is not easy to conceive how private Men can be safe in their Possessions; all Confidence in Mankind will be destroyed, and consequently all Security of Public Commerce. And should they even retire from Public Life and the busy World, I do not see how good Men could live  
in



*The Dedication.* vii

in their very Woods and Solitudes.

*May it please Your MAJESTY,*

It is not in Your Capital alone that Unbelief makes so much Destruction of the moral Virtues; the Contagion is spreading, and is disseminated even to the Confines of Your Kingdom. Our little remote Hamlets will now scarce protect us in our Duty from the Immoralities and Insults of profligate Men of Power, whilst Authority is abused into a Licence of Outrage. But I forbear the

A 4      Odium

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Odium of turning into a  
Remonstrance a Royal De-  
dication.

As we are further distant  
from the Influence of Maje-  
sty, as we are from the warm  
Beams of the Sun; if our  
fainter Effays in establishing  
Religion and Loyalty in  
Your Majesty's Subjects may  
in some sort represent the  
Climate, 'tis hop'd the Cen-  
sure of our Atchievements  
will, in Equity, be regulated  
accordingly. The same He-  
roism and enterprizing Spi-  
rit is not to be expected from

a Garrison upon the remotest Frontiers, as from the Prince's Life-guards, or those of some nearness to his Person.

If therefore Religion Militant find more, and abler Espousers under Your Gracious Majesty's more immediate Influence; Your Majesty must in Justice be regarded as the First Cause, and the best Part of the Performance is of just Right to be ascribed to Your Majesty: What we at remoter Distance attempt, in that Regard,

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gard, being purely the Effect of Duty, and the Debt we owe to the Public, should not be censured above our Assistances.

But if the Apologists for Religion be more excellent, as they be more numerous about the Metropolis, it being the Center, the Demand for them is the greater, as the Virulence of the Infection is there the most outrageous: For us on the Borders, if we can preserve the Villages and Extremity of the Kingdom, by stopping  
it's



it's Progress, that it come to  
no great Height, where the  
Labours of better Hands are  
not so current, or do but  
slightly penetrate; we hum-  
bly presume our Service to  
GOD, our Sovereign, and  
our Country, will not be  
behind That of those, who  
make a greater Blaze, by  
the Advantage of Station.

This Discourse seeks for  
no other Recommendation  
to Your Majesty's Clemen-  
cy and Gracious Protection,  
than it's honest Intention,  
supported by a just Confi-  
dence,

xii *The Dedication*

dence, that what is sincerely undertaken in Defence of Truth, and for the Honour of GOD and Religion, cannot be altogether displeasing to the most Religious of Queens, who is by Practice as well as Title, *Defender of the Faith*, and of whom the Author has the Honour and Happiness to be, with the greatest Veneration and Humility,

*May it please Your MAJESTY,*

*Your MAJESTY's most Loyal,*

*And most Faithfully Obedient*

*SUBJECT and SERVANT.*

*THE*

What is here offered, with all Defer-  
ence to the Reader's serious Consider-



mean the Truth of Religion. And that  
has been the Subject of my former

# PREFACE.



Shall take no Pains to  
make an apology for  
publishing the fol-  
lowing Discourse; a  
sincere Love for the  
Truth, and a Desire  
of informing, as well <sup>as</sup> of being better  
informed, will be an obvious and suf-  
ficient Vindication of me for doing it.

What

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*What is here offered, with all Deference to the Reader's serious Consideration, is the Result of the most deliberate and frequently repeated Inquiry after what shou'd undoubtedly be the chief Concern of every Wise Man, I mean the Truth of Religion. And that has been the Subject of most of my spare Thoughts and Reflections ever since I have been capable of examining it; to which, as even the most venomous Reptiles are not without their Use, the present Writers, in favour of Infidelity, have contributed not a little. And though they have cost me some Pains, and more Inquietude of Mind, the Profit I have thereby reaped has abundantly made me amends.*

*IF these Papers may prove to be  
of*



## The PREFACE. XV

of any Service in re-establishing the Minds of such common Readers, as have been unsettled, into whose Hands they may fall; or may tempt those of an higher Class to think better on't, and take a second Consideration, I have my End; or if it shall be made appear, that I am either deceived in any one Point, or that I have insisted upon any Thing not convictive, I will even make my Advantage of that.

ONE cannot however but take Notice, that though these Advocates of Infidelity are in the Main, contrary to their own Intentions, serving the Cause of Christianity; for Truth will appear the Brighter the more it is examin'd into, and thus by a Skirmish every now and then with it's Adversaries, it's

Pro-

## xvi The PREFACE.

Professors are the better prepared to defend it; for they might forget the Use of their Weapons, and neglect the necessary Ammunition, if they never were attack'd: Nay, perhaps the Christian Religion would have lost some of it's chief Evidences without it; yet it must be confessed, that it's a lamentable Thing to consider how much the Public in general suffers by these profane Writings: Even Men of some Learning, and who perhaps have once examined Things to their Satisfaction, begin to suspect their Judgment, or some Fallacy in their former Decisions, and are hereby unsettled, whilst weary of making so many Returns to their first Rudiments, they are willing to excuse themselves all further Trouble, by taking up with Scepticism and Indifference;

## The P R E F A C E. xvii

*ence; or what is not much better, an implicit Submission to their Guides. If this be the Case, as Experience says it is, 'tis hoped, that what the Reader will find in the following Pages, will not be thought Impertinent, nor entirely Useless.*

*T H E principal Design of these Sheets, is to give the unlearned Reader a summary View of what the Author takes to be the most undeniable Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion, which might easily have been protracted to a greater Length with several Things that offer'd in passing; but as it is, the Discourse is much longer than it was at first intended. This Convenience notwithstanding he will find in it, that it*

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may

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may excuse the Indolent, or the Man of Business, the Expence of both more Money and Time in consulting voluminous Treatises, whilst the Substance and main Drift of all their Arguments, 'tis presum'd, are here represented in little. And if it shou'd raise the Curiosity of others to take a larger View of the Doctrines here established, in their several Branches; the Hints occasionally interspersed will not be unserviceable even in that Regard.







## A LAYMAN'S FAITH, &c.



**S**INCE it has pleased Providence to reserve us to an Age, wherein the Great Truths of Religion are as maliciously, though not so acutely, opposed as they were by the ancient Heathens, and with a much worse Tendency, as well as with less Colour of Excuse; it gives just Cause to every Person of Reflection, who has enter'd his Name with JESUS CHRIST, to look about him, to discover on which Side the Truth lies; and upon Conviction, as that has an indefeasible Right to his Confession, if he finds it in the Principles of that Religion in which he has been educated, as no doubt he will, he is under a double Engagement, by Virtue of his Baptifmal Vow, of confessing his Saviour before all Men: This is being the Martyr of Truth, as far as God is pleased to give him Opportunity. Not that there is any Thing formidable in what it's Adversaries have to offer against revealed Religion, were all Men proper Judges; but the Party they have made among the Ignorant, the Prophane, and looser Sort, which always make the Bulk of Mankind, is in it's Consequences really formidable. And as a Man that is fully persuaded of the Truth of the sacred Writings, and has

examined the Prophecies therein contained, is so far from being shaken, that he is the more confirmed in his Persuasion of the Truth of them, by considering the present Attempts of Infidelity: So upon the same Stock of Persuasion he must be apprehensive that the Evil, under which he and most Part of Christendom do now Labour, is but the Introduction to something more black and dismal yet to come.

THIS naturally brings up to the Mind some Reflections on that happy State of the Christian Church, which we are yet to hope for; from which, by all Computations, we cannot be very far Distant, and on which the Prophets seem all to be in Raptures, and want Words to express themselves\*. But this is a Scene, as much Pleasure as it gives in Contemplation, especially in the present deplorable Calamity, I must not be indulged to expatiate in at present.

THE following Discourse was written by Way of Letter, for my better Information, as well as to give an Account of the Fundamentals of the Christian Religion, when I was some Years younger, which may in some Measure answer for the Form of it: But upon second Thoughts, and a due Examination of all the Evidences I have been able to collect for my private Satisfaction, the Attempts and idle Cavils of Infidelity were look'd upon with Contempt, and I begun to think the only Use, if any cou'd be made of

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\* I think there may be such cogent Arguments brought for the happy *Millennium*, (I mean not the carnal Notion of some of the primitive Fathers, which made it be condemn'd for a *Hereſie*) that to allegorize so many full Expressions of this Import, which cannot without Force be brought off from a literal Meaning, is to make the Interpretation of Scripture a very precarious Thing. Methinks I see a Passage in *Jeremiah* and *St. Paul*, upon which much might be built: But I only give Hints of what might be drawn out to large Discourses.

of my Collections, wou'd be to lay before the sober Reader what had thoroughly convinced my self. For I assure him, I profess myself a Friend to an honest Freedom of Thought, as much as any Man, and I have been as far Sceptical as Reason wou'd permit. But if I have doubted of the Truth of the Christian Religion, it was only 'till Conviction overcame me. 'Tis therefore hoped, that by the same Example he will impartially Use his Reason, for we desire him to give neither more nor less Weight to any Argument than it appears evidently to bear upon the strictest Examination; and this is a Proposal no Infidel can with Justice reject. And when he is thus convinced of the Fundamentals of Christianity, he will think it unbecoming a rational Man to doubt of the Whole, if he meets with some Difficulties in Revelation above his Reason, or which he wants Learning or Penetration enough to comprehend. How absurdly then do our Infidels act, who argue, after we have established the Truth of revealed Religion, that there is no Necessity for it; that the Religion of Nature was sufficient? which cou'd it be prov'd, as we have disproved it, is certainly beginning at the wrong End, and proving Backward; it's making the Last first, and the First last, which is a new Way of Argumentation.

IF this be a due Preparation for examining Truth, let us see whether we shall find it on the Side of what we have to offer in Defence of our Religion; wherein 'tis freely granted, that all Men ought to have the Liberty of proposing their Difficulties and Objections, provided it be done with such Modesty and Decency as the Subject requires, without giving Offence to the graver or weaker Part of Mankind, and whilst Things are managed with a Spirit of Candor and Sincerity, and an apparent Desire of Conviction rather than Debate. Was this the manner and scope of the present Writers against the Christian Religion,

ligion, there wou'd not be this Subject of Complaint, and we might, 'tis hoped, find Means of bringing Matters to an amicable Conclusion. But instead of this, their Design is manifestly to exterminate all instituted Religion under the Notion of Superstition, and turn the World loose (at least these are the Consequences of their Writings) to all Manner of Libertinism and Profaneness. If this be not their Intention, why don't they rebuke that unclean Spirit that is gone out from them into the World, and convince us that they abhor and reject those abandon'd and vicious Herds who pretend to be their Converts? Wou'd they do this, we shou'd be obliged to think better of them.

X By the Way then, I wou'd ask these Gentlemen who take upon them to pull down the Building of Ages, the Fabrick of Religion, in it's Plan coeval with the World, what it is they wou'd have erected in it's Room? If there is no Nation in the World, especially the more civilized, who have not more or less come into this Plan, and have been tenacious of some Institutions of Religion as of the last Importance, whence cou'd this happen, setting aside it's divine Original, but from the universal Necessity or Expediency at least of some establish'd Religion? And if we should be so singular as entirely to cast down our Foundations, notwithstanding the apparent Utility, in a human Regard, of some public and exterior Acts of Worship; this wou'd deface all Sense of natural Religion itself in the Minds of the People, and consequently sap the Foundations of all human Society. 'Tis plain therefore, even for Politic Ends, that there must be a Religion, and that an instituted, and (if I may call it so) popular One. I wou'd request then of these Gentlemen to give us a Scheme of what System they wou'd establish.

BUT to anticipate their Answer: Suppose any other



ther Plan of Worship might be offer'd, which in a worldly Regard wou'd do the Business of Mankind as well, what is it that they quarrel with in the Christian Religion? Is it too good, and too moral, and too holy for them! Blessed Philosophers! It checks their Vices, and bids them be better Men than they are, under Pain of eternal Torment. Here lies their Pique to it; they have neither Goodness nor Morality enough to be Christians! But what Refuge is there for them in any other Religion in the World? Do not they all profess a Belief of Rewards and Punishments after Death? And I defy the Adversaries of Revelation to advance any Religion but the Foundations of it, the Motives to Obedience, are laid in the Notions of a Heaven and a Hell, of which the Soul of Man cannot rid itself. Paganism then, as much Way as they are making for it, whatever they may intend, wou'd not in the main relieve them; that there is a Hell, as we said, has been the Creed of all Nations in the World. And whence came this and the other great Objects of Religion to be so universally and anciently believed, but that they were either handed down by Tradition from our first Parents, and were propagated throughout the World by the Patriarchal Families, or are \* written upon the Hearts of all Men? One or other, if not both of these Ways

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\* If the Belief of a God, exclusive of any natural Impression on the Conscience, cou'd have been propagated throughout the World solely upon the Strength of Tradition, 'tis not easy to account how that has never been worn off the Minds of Men, as well as several other originally revealed Truths, which very early miscarried in the Way of Propagation. Whereas the other cou'd never be defaced by *Epicurus* himself, or any of his Followers, which methinks evinces it to be innate, or at least so agreeable to the natural Disposition of the Soul, that it grows as it were into it's Nature, so that the most inveterate and abandon'd Course of Wickedness can never wholly extinguish it; I regard not what some have said in Vindication of *Epicurus* and his Followers: By the same Methods they may throw the Shade of Virtue over the most vicious of Mankind.

they must come, or it is unaccountable how they have been diffeminated thro' all human Societies. But we need not go far to seek Arguments, when we carry so good ones about us. God has not left himself without Witness in the Heart of every Man: The Remonstrances of his Conscience will forbid him to be an Atheist, and the natural Longings of the Soul for Immortality are no inconsiderable Indications of it's future and eternal Existence: Nay, they are the very Voice of Nature prompting us within, and bidding us look beyond Mortality.

BUT pass we all moral Proofs of the Soul's Super-Existence; and to omit all previous Reasonings, concerning the Advantages and Necessity of reveal'd Religion to Society, and the general Subversion of all Faith and Virtue upon the Removal of it: Before we part with our Religion, let us see what we can say in it's Defence, and let our Adversaries shew the Benefits accruing to Mankind by it's Extirpation. Now to consider the Disparity betwixt us, betwixt the Proposals of *Faith* and *Infidelity*.

How different the Prospects of a Christian and an Infidel! How transcendentally distant the Alternative their several Systems offer! Religion, fair Daughter of the Sky, looks up to the Mansions of Bliss with all the Serenity and Influence of Divinity, and urges us upward to the Possession of Delights beyond the most exuberant Fancy to reach, an Happiness too big for the most enlarged Mind to grasp! \* Infidelity, the

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\* This Description may seem to infer, that All Disbelievers of the Gospel are as doubtful and unsatisfied of a future State, which may not be strictly true, because some, and indeed all, that in any tolerable Sense can be said to be Free-thinking Infidels, do profess to believe that: But as Deism by unavoidable Consequences leads to Atheism; so the Article of the Deists Creed that respects a future State is perhaps not further believed than from the Teeth outward, for without Revelation there is not complete Demonstration of it; and this the greatest Philosophers, after summing up the Force of their Arguments, have confess'd: Indeed the Apparition of Spirits was admitted by some of 'em as a Proof of it, and so it must be, where-ever such a Thing is incontestably clear. And we have as good Evidence for the Truth of that, as we can have of any Thing we don't see with our own Eyes.

the Daughter of a gloomy Soul and guilty Conscience, excludes the Hope of Immortality thro' the Fear of it; like his Evil-Genius, haunts the self-abandon'd Wretch with the Horrors of Despair, plants Daggers in his Way to Happiness; sets before him the Miseries of Life in all their Terrors, and for his Comfort, points downwards to the Earth, and says, Here be thy Rest for ever; Here shake off thy Being, and mix with kindred Clay; Here shrink out of Sense into eternal Nothing! And is not this a most glorious Advantage, think ye, our Infidels thus gain over the Professors of Religion! Is it not a most desirable Privilege, after suffering the Whips of Fortune, and being worse used in Life than the Beasts of the Field, at last to make our Grave with them, and thus only 'scape our Persecutors without any Recompence for our Sufferings! What a Motive is this to bear, with Patience and manly Resignation, the Trials of Life, If this be all we hope to come! But can no Beams of unfading Glory in the Prospect of a future State brighten up those gloomy Mortals, and give a more chearful Turn to that Sullenness in their Disposition and Designs? No Comfort, or rather Transport in the View of immortal Youth and Beauty, in the Exchange of a wither'd Carcass and wrinkl'd Face for the Bloom and Brightness of an Angel! No Charms in the Glories of Eternity; in the perpetual Exemption from Old-Age, and all the Infirmities of Mortality! Is there no Matter of Triumph and Exultation in the refined and endless Joys of a celestial Happiness, where no Satiety, no Diminution can ever enter! which after Millions of Millions of Ages will be fresh and inviting as at first; nay, heightening and improving, as the Powers of the Soul will be enlarging to Eternity! And is utter Extirpation, final Perdition, a more eligible State, than a Perpetuity of Life, and everlasting Happiness! Are the gloomy Apartments and retiring Rooms of eternal Death of more joyous Consideration,

tion, than the glorious *Mansions in the House of the Father*, the inexpressible Pleasures of the heavenly Paradise! Surely a Man must be lost to common Sense, be far gone in a most deplorable Stupidity, but so much as to balance between such very different Alternatives! He must have a very downward Appetite to mix with Mud, who can rejoyce to forego his Hope of Immortality, and desire to return whole and for ever to his Earth again.

Now had any Infidel laid all the Arguments he could find for the Certainty of another Life in the Balance, and found them wanting, and then instead of triumphing upon the Discovery of their Insufficiency, shou'd testify the greatest Concern for the Disappointment of such glorious Expectations, and bewail himself as undone for ever, there wou'd be some Sign of this Man's Sincerity and Goodness, and one might have Hopes of his Conviction: But to propose That for the Scope of his Infidelity, which the Jewish Doctors reckon'd wou'd be the Punishment of the most execrable of the Damned, is something prodigiously amazing! 'Tis what Nature stands in Horror of, and shrinks at the very Thought! 'Tis contradicting what an Heathen Author says was the general Sense of Mankind, who, Women as well as Men, wou'd sooner suffer all the Torments of Hell, than not be immortal, tho' it were but in Misery! But these Wretches of a quite different Spirit, dare not entertain the Thoughts of Immortality, shiver at the least Glimpse of eternal Life, and for shelter, run to hide their Heads in the dusky Scenes of Horror, and call out to the Abysses of Inexistence, *Cover us for ever!* and must we thus let go the Hopes of Heaven, *the Crown of Life*, and everlasting Happiness after Death, as a golden Dream and vain Delusion, and be laugh'd out of our Creed with the Scoffs and Senseless Raillery of Fools and Madmen! *Consider of it,*  
take



take Advice, and speak your Minds. Judg. xix.  
30.

BUT it may be, there are some who are very good Friends in their Hearts to Religion, and wish nothing more than to find the Truth of it's *Promises*, but yet for want of sufficient Demonstration, or some particular Satisfaction, they can't persuade themselves to acquiesce intirely in it's *Denunciations*. Now as it is a Reproach to any Man of Sense to embrace a Persuasion, without being able to give his Reasons for doing so; I trust that *we shall be ready always to give an Answer to every Man that asketh us a Reason of the Hope that is in us.*

NONE of our modern Unbelievers, 'tis presumed, will now offer to deny the Being of a God, or assert that this vast Whole was the Work of Chance, and that so many Atoms jumping together struck out a World: Unless he wou'd make this pleasant Inference from it; that his Brain was the Product of such a fortuitous Concourse; and that it was odds from the different shuffling, and clashing, and Ebullitions of fanciful Particles but he had been a Believer as soon as an Infidel; or rather that he had thought nothing of the Matter, but that his Head had been as meer a Block, as one would take it to be.

BUT the present Infidels are in general ashamed of those beggarly Elements of their Birth, Matter, and Motion, and are pleased to allow a God some Hand in the Work of their Creation. We have then by their Courtesy obtained a God, but what a God must theirs be, who is destitute of all the Attributes that all rational People have always ascribed to him? *Is there not Knowledge in the most high?* If not, whence had we ours? If there is, (I speak upon *Epicurus's* and our Deists Hypothesis) where are his Goodness and

and Justice? the one to communicate himself to the World, and reveal his Will; and the other, pursuant to that Revelation, to reward or punish the Execution or Breach of it? Not to manifest himself to such Creatures as are capable of knowing and serving him, argues Neglect and Want of Goodness; not to recompence our good and bad Deeds, and make a Retribution for all the Miseries we suffer in this Life, cries aloud against his Injustice, and proclaims him the most cruel and unreasonable Being in the Universe, for calling up so many poor Wretches into Existence, subject to an Infinity of Evils, without any Prospect of a future Recompence: For without that, Man wou'd be the most wretched Part of the Creation; his Reason and Reflection wou'd only serve him to heighten his Sense of Misery. I suppose it then agreeable to God's Goodness and the natural Idea we have of him, to make a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, whereby they may know what they ought to do to please him, and obtain a Reward; and what they ought to avoid, because it is displeasing to him, and he will punish it. Now that natural Light, or what they call Religion of Nature cou'd not be wholly sufficient for this, the Experience of the World has abundantly evinced. And as that became more corrupted, and the Light grew dimmer the farther from it's Source, a God of Compassion and Goodness must naturally be supposed, since he had not thought fit to prevent such a Detection in Mankind, to republish his Laws to the World, from Time to Time, in such Dispensations as he saw proper. I shall quote a Passage to this purpose out of the most learned Bishop *Stillingsfleet's Origines Sacrae*; whose Reasons are so convictive for the just Expectation of a Divine Revelation over and above Natural Light, that all Pretences to the contrary will appear to a Person of any just Thinking very vain and frivolous. His Proposition is this: *The immediate Dis-*  
*states*

*States of natural Light are no sufficient Standard to judge of Divine Revelation by.* Upon which he proceeds:  
 " I mean not in Reference to Consonancy or Repugnancy to natural Light, but in Reference to the  
 " Extent and Latitude of Divine Revelation, i. e. that  
 " natural Light doth not contain in it whatever may  
 " be known of God or of his Will; and that upon  
 " these Reasons. 1<sup>st</sup>. It implies no Repugnancy to  
 " any dictate of Nature, that God shou'd reveal any  
 " Thing more of his Mind and Will, than is contain'd in the Light of Nature. 2<sup>d</sup>. Nature reacheth, as to Matters concerning Religion, no further  
 " than the Obligation to Dury; but leaves the particular Determination of the Manner of Obedience  
 " to divine positive Laws, as is clear in Reference to  
 " the Time, Place, and particular Duties of Worship. 3<sup>d</sup>. Nature owning an universal Obligation  
 " to the Will of God in whatever he shall command,  
 " doth suppose a Power in God to command what  
 " he pleaseth. 4<sup>th</sup>. Nature is sensible of it's own Decay, and the Imperfection of it's own Light,  
 " and therefore seems rather to require further Illumination then to put any Bar against it. 5<sup>th</sup>. Man's  
 " Happinefs being a free Gift of God's, it stands to the highest Reason that he shou'd have the prescribing of the Conditions which are in Order to it;  
 " now these Conditions being the Results, not of  
 " God's Nature, but of his arbitrary Will, it is  
 " impossible that natural Light cou'd ever reach to the full Discovery of them. 6<sup>th</sup>. It hath been the  
 " general Sense of all Nations in the World, that  
 " God may reveal more of his Will than Nature can reach unto; which Sense discovers it self in two  
 " Things. 1. Praying to their several Gods for Direction. 2. Harkening after pretended Oracles,  
 " which the Devil cou'd never have had that Advantage of deceiving the World by, had it not been  
 " for this general Sense of Mankind, that there wanted  
 " ted

“ted some particular Revelation from God to make  
 “Men happy. So then this may be assumed as a  
 “Principle, That God may reveal more of his Mind  
 “and Will to Mankind, than he hath done by the  
 “Dictates of mere natural Light and Reason.”

Now this, to say no more, is sufficient Evidence of the Necessity of an express Revelation, that when Men by Sins have offended the Divine Majesty, there shou'd be a Discovery made by what Means they may propitiate the Deity, and be again received into Favour. And how cou'd they assure themselves that Repentance wou'd be sufficient, or that any Attonement cou'd be made for Sins, without God's manifesting his Acceptance of it? Indeed, the general Practice of Sacrificing in the Heathen World shews they had a Notion that some Attonement might be made; but the Philosophers, and the more Intelligent among them owned themselves, much at a Loss for the Certainty of these Things, as well as all Things else relating to the Deity: And in this we may suppose *Plato* to speak the Sense of all the Rest. And wou'd our Modern pretended Wits have struck out better Lights than *Socrates*, *Plato*, or *Cicero*, upon their own Stock, cou'd ever do? yet these were beholden to Revelation, or they had succeeded much worse, for the World was never without it's Advantages more or less. Even those very \* Sacrifices of whose first Institution and Efficacy these Philosophers were ignorant, and whose Original by tract of Time had been forgotten in the Heathen World, may be demonstrated to be of a Divine Foundation, which leads us directly to a Revelation and the Sanction of positive Duties.

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\* That Sacrifices were originally of divine Institution, has been thoroughly vindicated by several learned Men against the contrary Notion of both Ancients and Moderns; particularly *St. Chrysostom* and the Author of the Answers to the Orthodox, among the Works of *J. Martyr*, and *Grotius*, *Spencer*, *le Clerc*, and others.



IN Truth, the Knowledge we have attained beyond the most inlightned Heathens plainly enough speaks the Advantage of the Christian Revelation; and their Want or Perversion, and Miscarriages thereby occasioned, the absolute Necessity of a plenary Publication of it, and that enacted by the most authentic Authority. We may therefore with the greatest Reason expect from the Goodness of God an especial Declaration of his Will. What then can bid fairer for this Revelation than what we call *the Written Word of God*? Let them produce Books, if they can, of equal Antiquity with the Books of *Moses* and the more ancient Canonical Scriptures; Books more incontestably acknowledged to belong to the Authors to whom they are ascribed than the whole Canon of Scripture in general; Books more universally allowed to be of divine Authority by all that have had the best Opportunity of examining their Authentickness: Let them tell us of Books that carry better Credentials of Heaven, more evident Marks and Characters of Divinity than those we have, and we will embrace them. If there are \* such, in what far Country have they been kept so long from our Notice? If there are not, as I believe our Adversaries will allow there are not, in

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\* It is not impossible but we may be here taken up by some shrewd Infidel, who will pretend to find such Scriptures in the Hands of the *Abrahamists*, a very particular Tribe in *Egypt*, according to the Account of a late Traveller: But this is a Relation the more extraordinary, as I believe it is to be found in no other Author. We are therefore safe enough 'till any one shall think fit to produce these Books against us.

If *R. Simon*, the late learned *French* Critic, and some others may have heard of these *Egyptian* Sages and their Scriptures, I shou'd suspect that they had thence borrowed their absurd Notion about the Historical Books of the O. T. or rather a later Author from him. 'Tis not unlikely that there may be such Pretenders to Antiquity in *Egypt*, but their Pretensions must be very New, or they cou'd never have been so long unknown to the learned World.

the Name of God let us make the best Use of these we have.

Now we need not go so far about to prove the Authority of our Scriptures; the very Books speak their Author. If we cou'd not make out some external Circumstances of Evidence, tho' these are all most abundantly cleared, and I have neither Room nor Design here to add any Thing by Way of Corroboration; yet the Matter of these Writings is so far above all human Composures, that they breath of nothing but Heaven, and the Finger of God is visible throughout. What a sublimity of Conception when the Supreme Being is the Subject! What a refined and exalted Moral above all the Maxims of the World and it's most boasted Philosophers, when they give Lessons of Conduct to Mankind! There is this Manifest Difference betwixt these and all mere moral Productions; the Scriptures speak of Men in the Language of Divinity, Philosophers speak of God in the low unequal Stile of Men: Those by their Precepts wou'd raise Men to approach the Deity, the others pull down the Deity to the Level of Mortals! I believe *Homer* and *Virgil* will be allowed to have written in the greatest Sublimity of Expression and Sentiment of any uninspired Authors; but what a visible Disparity between their boldest Flights and some of the Poetical Parts of the old Testament! Does not the Book of *Job* shine out amidst the Disadvantages of a Prose Translation, and that as plain as may be, above all the Strokes and Flowers of the most elegant human Poetry? Are there not more warm and lively Descriptions in the Prophets and *Revelations*, than ever were drawn by the Pen of Man? And what is further considerable, if we run thro' all the Writings of the most celebrated Philosophers of Antiquity, we shall be so far from finding a tolerable System of Morality, that they are nothing but Contradiction, and

and at perpetual Variance in their Sentiments of the supreme Good and their Decisions of moral Virtue; an unanswerable Argument that these Men were never designed, nor were sufficient to reform the World. But in Case they had been better qualified for this great Work, both by Consistency of Doctrine and Practice, they still wanted the Sanction of Divine Authority, without which no Doctrine will have much Influence on the Lives of Men. Is it not then a Demonstration of the Divine Mission of the first Heralds of the Gospel, whilst being mostly ignorant and illiterate Men, of the lowest Rank and Education, they so far transcended all the Philosophers in the World put together, that these learned Heathens are infinitely unworthy of being brought into Comparison? As to the Method of these Divine Writings, Mr. Boyle's excellent Book of *the Style of the H. Scripture* will satisfy any Person who does not labour under the most unreasonable Prejudice.

Now to consider the Matter of Religion, and especially Christianity. It is the Confession of all the best Heathen Philosophers, that human Nature is very much debased and fallen from it's original State and Constitution, and that there is a Necessity of some general Way of raising it up again, and of recovering Souls. And where do we meet with so rational an Account of the Fall of Man, and of the Means of his Recovery as in our Scriptures? Of the Former there are evident Traces in the Heathen Mythology, which lead us back thro' several Windings to the Scriptures or primæval Tradition as their Original; and to our Account of the Causes of human Corruption, (the Abuse of our Liberty) and the Entrance of Sin into the World their Philosophers have subscribed. It is most evident that *Plato* derived most of his Lights in this Matter from the Scriptures, or the Jews with whom he conversed in *Egypt*, or it might

be at second Hand, from the *Egyptians*, which comes much to the same, tho' he had the Disingenuity and Pride not to own his Benefactors, but cloathed his new-gotten Knowledge in a *Grecian* Garb to disguise the Stranger and pass with his Countrymen the better. And as for the latter Race of Philosophers, of the School of *Ammonius*, they by the Benefit of Christianity had much nobler Conceptions, and wrote in a more exalted Strain concerning the Degeneracy and Revolt of Mens Souls from God, and the Way whereby the Soul may return to him again, than the Sublimest of the ancient Philosophers ever did. Here we have the wisest of the Heathens on our Side; so much does right Reason lead all Men who are blessed with it into a Concurrence of Sentiment.

WE have then Heathen Philosophers concurring with us in acknowledging the Necessity of that Work for which *God was manifested in the Flesh*. What then cou'd induce them with the Infidels of our Days to deny the Fact and reject the Lord of Life? Was it inconceivableness of so great a Mystery, or Want of Evidence either in the Accomplishment or in the Original Promise of *God's sending his Son into the World*, and the several Prophecies relating to his Coming? For the First, where is the Difficulty of conceiving a Man born of a Virgin by the immediate Power and Influence of the Almighty, whereby the Divinity dwelt in him in all Fulness, so that he was God and Man together? The Heathens cannot cry out Incredibilities here, because they had several Emblems and fictitious Examples of it in their Religion: And it is the Sentiment of their best and most ancient Authors, as I cou'd shew, that the Gods might visit Mankind in this manner in order for their Benefit and Instruction. The Deists, who believe God created the World and formed Man out of the Dust of the Earth, cannot tax this with Impossibility, because there is much



much less Difficulty and Wonder in a Female's Conception without the Conjunction of the Male; for here is a Subject prepared, a fit Recipient for the impregnating Influence. But there was no more Conformity betwixt the Particles of the Earth and the organized Parts of Man's Body, no more natural Aptness in the inanimate Clods to form a living Creature *then* than there is *now*. We see no such Production in our Days, nor wou'd there ever have been such without the Interposal of an Almighty Power. If then one of these has actually happen'd, and was incomparably the great Wonder of the Two, the Possibility of the other cannot reasonably be contested. The Disbelief then of this capital Truth of Fact is to be ascribed on both Sides to an obstinate Prejudice and the over-bearing Pride of human Reason. As for the Evidence of the Prophecies concerning this great Event, and the Accomplishment of them, our Scriptures will be answerable, whose Authority I will take for granted, since from what has been said upon that Subject I persuade myself our Adversaries will not readily refute it. Not to mention the general Expectation of the Eastern World of such a Person. As to the Clearness of these Prophecies and their Completion, something will be said afterwards.

WE have so much therefore clear: The Fall of Man, in it's Consequences at least, is confessed on all Hands, but by a \* modern Sect who are too great

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\* The Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation* was so sensible of what a strong Objection his Scheme wou'd meet with from the Fall of Man and it's Consequences, that he was resolv'd to obviate it as well as he cou'd, by denying the Fact and any Decay in the human Faculties consequent thereupon; so that human Reason, according to him, was at all Times sufficient to direct Men in Matters of Religion, without any supply of Revelation. But when we have proved the Divine Authority of the Christian Revelation and the Authenticalness of our Scriptures, this Author is smote Hip and Thigh, and his Book is so sinew-cut in it's main Argument, that as many little Springs as he has given this Piece of antichristian Artillery, the Machine is quite disabled.

Strangers to true Philosophy and sound Reason, to be of any Consideration, unless one cou'd mend their Senses by some outward Applications, or more *sensible* Arguments: And the Necessity of his Redemption and a Recovery of Souls is agreed upon to be of absolute Importance. Now look but into the Bible, and you find a Remedy, a Catholicon for this Grand, this universal Disease! No sooner had Man fallen but we find a Promise of a Saviour and Redeemer. Pursuant to this, for the Necessity of the Son of God's taking upon him human Nature, setting aside all moral Reasons, *Irenæus* may answer for us: *Unless God had provided for our Salvation by Man, he wou'd seem in some Sort to be over-come by the Serpent; as therefore by Man came Death, by Man must come also the Resurrection of the Dead.*

As God likewise had promised this Victory to Man over the Serpent, his Veracity engaged him to absolve his Promise; but no Person, merely human, cou'd offer himself to this Work, being in Consequence of the Fall obnoxious to Death and God's Justice: Whence plainly appears the Necessity of God's sending his Son into the World, born of a Virgin, and free from the Corruption of human nature since the Fall.

If this be a satisfactory Reason of our Saviour's coming, we will try to give a new Proof of the Truth of the original Promise whereon the Eastern World especially grounded their Expectation of him. The Devil seems to have had an envious Eye, as he had reason, upon this famous Oracle, from it's first Delivery, and to have used his utmost Efforts to obscure or pervert it's Meaning.

As on the one Hand, the People of God have had their Sacrifices from the Beginning, which were typical of a better, more compleat and universal Sacrifice for Sins, which was yet future, and these Types and

and Images of *better Things to come* were only so far effectual to the Pardon of Sins as they had a Reference to their Antitype, the Saviour of the World, and all ended in him: So it is Conviction that these Sacramental Acts were founded on the Expectation of a Saviour and Redeemer, and they demonstrate that the Promise of him was very early given to Mankind. On the other Hand, this receives an Accession of Evidence, in regard that all the other Patriarchal Families, who had wander'd from the Fold of the Church, and were out of the Alliance God had made with his peculiar People, had originally the same Sacrifices, and directed to the same End; but by Tract of Time and the natural Corruption of the Truth and Practice among a People left to themselves, they forgot the original Institution and chief Purport of their religious Rites; of which the Devil taking Advantage, and being always emulous of the Worship of the true God, easily run away with their Sacrifices, and engaged them in the Service and Adoration of Him and his Associates,

- AND what is further observable, as he was well acquainted, either from the Sacred Writings, or otherways, with God's Design of sending his Son into the World to be offered a Victim for the Sins of Mankind, the Pride and Malice of this apostate Spirit, urging him on to mimic God in his sublimest Mysteries, he easily insinuated his Delusions into the Minds of Men, which he had sufficiently darkned for his Purpose; or perhaps suggesting some obscure and broken Traditions for it, or improving his Opportunity from some natural Results of Reason for the Expediency and Efficacy of some human Victim to expiate the Sins of a People, as seems the Case with such civiliz'd Nations as the *Romans* and others, he thus made Way for the Introduction of human Sacrifices into his Worship. But this Matter perhaps deserves to be further

opened and Discussed in a larger Dissertation. However thus much to me seems a very forcible Argument for the sure Ground of the Expectation of the Messiah's coming.

AND this great Occurrence was the Subject of the most ancient Oracles; here was a most comfortable Expectation for the lost Posterity of Adam. Here we have a most infallible Testimony for the Truth of our Scriptures, and the Expectation of all Men at Christ's Coming into the World confirmed by the Event, as well as authorized by God's express Declaration and Promise. Are these Things so or not? If it is replied not, let me ask, was there ever any such Thing as Prophecy in the World? I suppose this will scarce be denied, because the least Knowledge of the History of the World will convince one of it. If Prophecy is allowed, is not this to acknowledge a Communication betwixt a superior Being and Mankind? Hence we come at the Existence of immaterial Beings, a Revelation, and all the Mysteries transmitted to us by that; For that there are any Powers in the Soul of foretelling Things future, merely contingent, and depending upon free Agents, is altogether inconceivable. We have thus gained the Knowledge of a supreme Being, the Author of Prophecy and Revelation. \* Now

\* I must take leave to observe this by the Way, in Refutation of *Deism* or *Scepticism*; that if we have as good Testimony as we have for any other equally distant Facts (it lies on our Adversaries to prove that we have not) that the Laws of Nature, from time to time, have been interrupted on a Religious Account; that Prophecies have been delivered; and that several Things not knowable by human Means have been reveal'd; it is a Demonstration that there are invisible Beings of more than human Power and Knowledge, who are concerned in the Actions of Men: Which if it does not immediately prove a God, a supreme Administrator, it leads in a direct Path to him. But when, notwithstanding the vast Distance betwixt some of them, we perceive an Uniformity of Design and a Concatenation of Causes in all these supernatural Occurrences, which is to establish, support, and propagate a Religion, in Substance the same, under all its several Dispensations; here is a Demonstration of a Providence, of a Superintendant over the Affairs of the World, who is always One and the Same, always consistent with himself; and that whether this supreme Being acts immediately or by his Ministers, he is primarily the Author of these Revelations, which have been made to Mankind. Whence we must conclude, that doubtless there is a God that judgeth the Earth, and who for that End has revealed his Will to us.



Now since there were a great many Prophecies relating to the Messiah, the Reality of these once admitted, Infidelity has no Recourse but to deny their Completion in Jesus Christ. But to undertake to prove this in Form wou'd require a larger Compass than my Design will allow. The Reader will receive abundant Satisfaction in this Article from Bishop Chandler's learned Answer to, *The Grounds and Reasons*, &c. Mr. Chandler's Book upon the same Subject, and Mr. Bullock's Answer to, *The Scheme of literal Prophecy consider'd*; to which, for Brevity, I refer him. This let me add, the severest Opposers of Christianity in it's Infancy, convicted by the Evidence of the Thing, cou'd not deny the Accomplishment of these Prophecies, and some of these had more Wit and Subtilty than all our Mushroom Sect of mis-call'd *Free-Thinkers* put together. Not to mention, that the most learned of the Jewish Doctors declared, that the Messiah was expected at the Time when our Gospels evince his Coming, some of which receiv'd him; others, carried away with the common Prejudice of their Nation, looking for a temporal and triumphant Monarch, rejected him. Nay, their very *Talmud* shows that his Coming at that Time was the general Expectation of the Jews.

BUT in Case we shou'd make as large Concessions as Infidels can demand, and allow the Obscurity of the Prophetic Style of the Old Testament, and the greatest Difficulty in reconciling the ancient Oracles to the Person of Jesus, even supposing as great an Inconsistency in the Application as the carnal Jews wou'd have it, none of which we are under the least Necessity of yielding, the contrary being demonstrable; But I will go yet further, and suppose the entire Silence of the old Testament as to this Matter, where will be the Victory these Gentlemen will by this Means obtain?

obtain? Our Saviour's Miracles are an abundant Proof of his Divine Mission, and that further confirmed by his Spirit of Prophecy, which has successively received new Accessions of Evidence thro' all Ages down to us, and will continue to do so 'till the Consummation of all Things. The preceeding Prophecies of the Old Testament served for so many Lights, to direct the World where to look for the Messiah; his own incomparably greater Lights demonstrably proved himself to be the Person. In a Word, the ancient Prophecies are an Evidence for Jesus Christ; his own Works and \* Prophecies are a greater.

BUT to step a little back. What shall we say of the wonderful Star that denounced like an Herald from the Skies the Birth of the Prince of Peace? † That it was no Comet all the Observers of the Heavens in those Times confess, and the Prodigy brought *Charemon*, the *Stoick* Philosopher, with other Astrologers his Companions, into *Judea*, to enquire after the true God, for he judged it to be a Star of benign In-

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\* I may observe that our Saviour's Prophecies and their Accomplishment were so very illustrious, that even Heathen Historians bear Witness to the Truth of 'em. One may instance in the famous *Phlegon*, who assures us, that whatever he foretold (or *St. Peter* from him) exactly came to pass. And how memorably and miraculously his Predictions of the Destruction of *Jerusalem* were accomplished *Ammianus Marcellinus* will inform us; not to mention *Tacitus* and others. But see this more abundantly illustrated in the *Appeal* referred to below.

† The *Greeks* believe this Phenomenon to have been an Angel under the Figure here described, which I conceive to be the most probable Account of it. The several Opinions concerning it are not worth mentioning, nor do I think the Arguments of *Spanhemius* against the Notion of the *Greeks* conclusive. It was much more in the ordinary Course to send an Angel upon this Errand, than purposely make up a luminous Body for this Post, and then dismiss it into it's first Elements when it had done it's Office. This will be further corroborated by considering the Pillar of Fire that led the *Israelites*, which was no other than the Divine Retinue of Angels.

Influence to Mankind, and perceived the Power of his Gods was diminished and overthrown. † *Chalcidius* the *Platonist* likewise attests that the *Chaldeans* observed that Star to signify the Salutory coming of God upon Earth for the Sake of Mankind. What says *Julian the Apostate* of this Star and the Coming of the *Magi*? Did he deny it? He cou'd not, but endeavour'd to escape at this Pinch by a ridiculous Evasion, which both the preceeding and subsequent Ages have fully expos'd and brought to nothing; viz. That every four hundredth Year the same Star might be observed.

We have thus obtained the Messiah, a Saviour and Redeemer, according to the Prediction of ancient Oracles, coming with Miracles and all the Characters of an heavenly Mission, at a Time when the World was in the greatest Expectation of him. Will they now say that Miracles are not a Demonstration of more than Mortal Power? That Miracles have been wrought, who can reasonably deny? (The Absurdity of Mr. *Woolston's* Scheme will appear afterwards) and the very Name in our Acceptation of it imports something Super-natural and above all human Force. Now whether these Portents proceed from the Agency of good or evil Beings, is easily determinable from their Use

† Suppose this Testimony not to be genuine, as the learned *Spanheim* hesitates in his Opinion, tho' I don't see for what; yet this History of the Star being admitted by so bitter an Enemy to Christianity, and a Man of so much Sagacity and Learning as the Apostate *Julian*, is surely Argument enough, that the Thing was in his Time above all Question. To omit an internal Demonstration from the very Nature of the History, with what View St. *Matthew* cou'd have related such a Story if it had not been undeniably true, for the Coming of the *Wise-Men* must have been a very public Thing as the Circumstances shew, and cou'd the Historian be so idle a Legendary to ruin the Credit of his Book by one single Fact, so much out of the High-Road of History, that no Man wou'd have expected it!

Use and Design. That God will not lend his Power to countenance or authorize a Falshood, is most certain. Nor can we expect to find such divine Powers communicated to Persons without a Conformity of Life and Manners. That God then, primarily, was the Author of the Miracles wrought by Jesus and his Apostles, is most apparent from the Doctrine they would establish by them, and the Character of the Persons. Now that Christ and his Apostles wrought such Wonders as are recorded of them, we have the Testimony of the Learnedest Heathens, who cou'd not deny it, some of which were converted upon it; others more perverse and obstinate cou'd not gainsay the Truth of them, tho' they endeavour'd to elude the Inference. Did not also the Fathers of the Church in their Apologies to the Roman Emperors, appeal to their public Archives for the Truth of these Facts? Nay, *Quadratus*, the learned Bishop of *Athens*, in the excellent Apology he presented to the Emperor *Adrian*, urging the Conspicuousness of our Saviour's Miracles, gives this most insuperable Testimony, as *Eusebius* preserves it to us, "That the Persons cured by our Lord, and such as were raised from the Dead by him, were afterwards not only publicly conversant with all Men, and during his Stay upon Earth, but that they continued alive a long Time after, so that some of them were even then living when he wrote his Defence." Which if false had been such an unparallel'd Impudence as well as Weakness to assert in so public a Manner, and upon such an Occasion, when it might be so easily refuted to the Ruin of his Cause. And have we not Evidences from Heathen Authors yet remaining that there was such a Person as Jesus Christ, who wrought the Miracles related of him? Does not \* *Josephus* also, that celebrated

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\* The Genuineness of this Testimony of *Josephus*, however excepted against by some Critics, has been late sufficiently vindicated by a learned Hand.



brated  *Jewish*  Commander and excellent Historian, entirely agree with our Evangelists in the Account of his Life, his Manners, and his Death? And then for the wonderful Circumstances of his Death, confessedly supernatural, as the  *Concomitants*  of the Earthquake, and the † universal Eclipse of the Sun, which can never happen in a natural Way, much less now, when by the Avowal of all Astronomers, the two great Luminaries were as far from Conjunction as may be, being in Opposition; I say for the Truth of these Circumstances we have the concurrent Testimony of † Heathen Authors still extant. We might have subjoined the Rending of the Vail of the Temple at the same Time, a Miracle as incontestable as any of the former, and to which  *Josephus*  likewise subscribes. Does not  *Lucian* , the Presbyter of  *Antioch* , desire his Judges to consult their own Annals for the Truth of these Things? Does not  *Eusebius*  confirm all these Facts out of the Heathen Commentaries? And does not  *Tertullian*  refer the Heathens to their own Books of Records? What Room then is here for Doubt and Infidelity? Were not the Men of that Age as much in their Senses as we are? Could they not be certain whether they heard Christ and his Apostles preaching, and saw them working Miracles as much as we could have been, had we been in their Places? Or wou'd so many wise and learned Men expose themselves to the most

† Whether this Eclipse was universal, or included the whole Land of Judea only, or the whole Roman Empire, as the Original Terms may import, the Miracle, methinks is equally incontestible. But as Heathen Authors mention it, and from the Manner in which it is urged by the Christian Apologists, it must have been universal.

† See a late Piece entitled  *An Appeal to the genuine Records and Testimonies of Heathen and Jewish Writers* , &c. for which I dare promise the learned Author the Thanks of every good Man that shall read it. I must further declare my Impatience of seeing the second Part abroad, and his curious Dissertation on the famous Verse of 1 Epist. of St. John, which I believe will be very acceptable to the learned Reader.

most exquisite Torments and Mockery of the inhuman Persecutors of Christianity, and throw away their Lives for an Uncertainty, nay, for any Thing short of the most sensible Evidence? Surely not. Learning likewise and all Politeness were then at their utmost Summit, there is therefore the less Ground for any Suspicion that the World could be then so egregiously imposed upon.

WE have now seen the Son of God upon Earth; have considered his Life and Death. Let us next see what Evidence we have of his Resurrection. Now we have the Confession of Heathens themselves that some Persons rose again after they were dead; they cannot therefore by the same Reason utterly deny the Resurrection of our Lord as incredible. And why should not our Apostles, Eye-Witnesses, have as much Credit as *Plato*, *Herodotus*, *Plutarch* and *Pliny*, who give us a Relation of several dead Persons who returned to Life after some considerable Space, and yet were never challenged for their Fidelity upon any conceived Improbability in these Stories? Even some Philosophers have pretended to account for them upon natural Principles, so far from thinking them incredible.

HOWEVER it be, it shews thus much at least, that the Heathens, even the greatest Men amongst them, did not think a Resuscitation impossible or improbable.

IT is further probable, that God may have given these Examples of a Resurrection among Heathens, the better to prepare them for the Belief of his Son's Resurrection, as he had done the same among the *Jews*. Now admitting the Credibility of a Reviviscence, from these Instances, which 'tis plain the World must have done, or with what View of Success cou'd such

such Relations be passed upon them? And without something of this Kind really happening somewhere, how cou'd it come into the Head of so many Persons of different Times and Places to vent so unlikely a Fiction? Admitting this, can we with any Shadow of Justice dispute the Veracity of our Apostles, for relating a Thing of their own Knowledge, as credible at least, and of which it most nearly concerned them to be \* convinced, because they laid down their Lives in the Assertion? Cou'd any Men be so unnatural after finding themselves deceived, to make it the whole Business of their Lives to go about the World to deceive others at the Expence of the Cruellest of Torments, and Death in the most dreadful Shapes! Here is not the least plausible Pretence for any such Supposition. Did not they assert these Things publicly at *Jerusalem*, when the Cheat would presently have been discovered, if it had been one, because that was the Place where this wonderful Scene was laid, and they published the Thing immediately before Magistrates who did all they cou'd to suppress it, and before a Confluence of People from all Parts of the East, among whom they made Multitudes of Converts? Did not *Pilate* himself, who condemned the Lord of Glory, witness to the Truth of this? Were not the Procurator's † *Acts* transmitted to the Roman Archives, at least some Memoirs relating to this

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\* See this Matter fully discussed in a late Piece entitled *The Trial of the Witnesses of the Resurrection of Jesus*. And elsewhere.

† I can't imagine how Monsieur le Clerc comes to suspect whether there were ever any *Acts of Pilate* genuine, and therefore wou'd not have these insisted on as a Proof in this Case. This methinks is making Fools of these great Apologists with a Witness! I know not whether it be worth taking Notice, that a Writer but the other Day has taken up the same Sentiment: But upon what Reasons, and with what View? — I say nothing of the Dissertation on *Phlegon's Eclipse*; that may be the Concern of another. I will only add this, that whether there were ever properly any *Acts of Pilate*, it imports not much; but that there were some authentic Memoirs of *Pilate's*, touching Christ's Crucifixion, &c. I see no Reason to call in question.

this Affair, and appealed to in the most public Manner by *Justin Martyr* and *Tertullian*, in their Apologies to the Roman Emperors themselves, for a Confirmation of the Truth of Jesus's Resurrection. This was challenging Mankind to contradict them. I shall not mention here the Absurdity of supposing any Impostition upon, or Collusion in the Guards of the Sepulchre, it being too great for a Man of Sense, or of the least Knowledge of the Roman Military Discipline to make a Question of it. Besides *Pilate's* Testimony puts the Matter out of doubt. And to be further assured, that those Witnesses of our Lord's Resurrection had sufficient Conviction themselves; they tell us, they conversed with him (from Time to Time for) forty Days after he was risen, that Men and Women saw him, that themselves touched him, talk'd with him, eat and drank with him. And, which is an especial Instance that the Apostles were not overcredulous, *Thomas* declared his Unbelief, till he had thrust his Hand to his Master's Side, handled the Prints of his late Wounds, and convinced himself by feeling. What cou'd any Infidel of our Days have done more to convince himself?

NOR was this all, the sensible Effects they found in themselves were a further Confirmation of their Belief. Those poor illiterate and timorous Men, who fled, and forsook their Master, when he was apprehended; He, whom a Word from a Maid Servant threw into terrible Apprehensions, and who denied his living Master thrice in an Hour; when he was remov'd from them, assert him with one consent, preach him before Rulers and Kings, and the Grandees of the Earth, and plant their Saviour's Cross around the World! What strange Energy was this! Cou'd this Influence flow from a putrifying and hopeless Carcass? Rather does it not demonstrate Jesus to be living, to live and speak in his Disciples, to inspire



spire and animate all their Motions? *Why seek ye the Living among the Dead? Behold he is risen!*

BUT let us consider the Day of *Pentecost*, and the Descent of the Holy Ghost. Here is a most punctual Performance of their Master's Promise, and an invincible Evidence of his being the Christ. He tells his Disciples that he wou'd rise again, and after he had risen, he bids them wait at *Jerusalem*, after his Ascension, for another Comforter, whom he promises to send them. Now had Christ, like *Muhammed*, limited his promised Resurrection to some very far distant Period, he might have escaped any Discovery of Imposture in the *Interim*, in Case he had been an Impostor; but to fix the Time to three Days Space, and his Promise of another Comforter to so strict an Injunction, that they were not to remove from *Jerusalem*, 'till they had received him, which was within ten Days after his Ascension, evidently shews that he was able to perform, and that he did perform his Engagements. And what so wonderful as the Accomplishment of this Promise in the very *observable* Descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, accompanied with the Inspiration of all Languages, and the Power of working Miracles, with such a Profusion of the Spirit and heavenly Influence, that they communicated the same Virtues to others? Now that such a Number of illiterate, plain, and undesigning Men, as the History of their Lives and of their Master's fully Evinces, shou'd be immediately inspired with a Faculty of speaking \* all Languages in the Hear-

\* Our *Lightfoot*, and a learned foreign Professor now living have expressed a Sentiment that the ancient *Hebrew*, then a dead Language, was the only Tongue with which the Apostles were then inspired; for which the latter has given some pretty good Arguments, yet declares himself more inclined to rest in the commonly received Opinion, and I think with Reason, but with this Restriction, that the Tongues in question were only the *Hebrew* and it's several Dialects, with the *Greek* and *Latin*. And yet the other wou'd have been a real Miracle, tho' not so illustrious and beneficial. As for our usual Acceptation of a Symbolical Apparition of fiery cloven Tongues, it is not the necessary import of the Terms, which give a more natural and commodious Sense.

Hearing of so many several Nations assembled at once, attended with other such manifest Signs of a divine Power, and these continued on them for Life, evidences the Incontestableness of this Miracle above all Suspicion of Imposture and Enthusiasm.

BUT what shall we say to the wonderful Effects of this divine Power and Commission? In Consequence of these extraordinary Gifts, this divine Saviour's Command, *go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to the whole Creation*, is punctually fulfilled; his Gospel is propagated throughout the World within forty Years, not by Force of Arms, not by the Prevalence of Power, but merely by the Efficacy of Preaching, notwithstanding all the Opposition of the Powers of the World, Torments and Death, and all the Passions and temporal Interest of Mankind. Is this no Demonstration of the Truth of the Christian Religion, and that no Hand but that of Heaven cou'd have effected a Work so impracticable by all human Means? This certainly is a Miracle incomparably surpassing all the Rest. Nor was this a mere Conversion to a particular Persuasion, or Acquiescence in a Doctrine, but an entire Change of Life and Manners, so great, that we see the ancient Apologists insult over their Adversaries in this Regard, and challenge them to show any such Purity among them. An internal Demonstration of an heavenly Influence attending it. What can Mr. *Woolston* or any of his Party say to this? As for his Discourses on the Miracles, &c. they are so much Sophistry and Misrepresentation of Authors and Things, together with so much Malignity and ill-design, that the least Tincture of good Learning will readily discover their false Light; and whoever will thoroughly weigh what has been said in this little Compass, will not suffer his Faith to be much shaken by them.

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Besides, they have been most compleatly confuted by a very learned Hand.

I might add another principal Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion, I mean the Miracles continued in the Church for two or three hundred Years after Christ, even 'till the almost total Extirpation of Paganism; and also the intrepid and heroic Sufferings of the primitive Christians under the ten Heathen Persecutions, whose various Tortures and hellish Cruelty give Horror in the very Relation: Yet they underwent these with the utmost Rejoycing, courted Torments and Death in the most hideous Appearances, whilst a red-hot Iron Chair, or a Grid-Iron, was to them more grateful than a Bed of Down! What but the immediate Influence of Heaven cou'd support and refresh them under these fiery Trials? Did not they by Sufferings over-come the World, and all the Machinations of the Powers of Darkneſs, and thus give an invincible Proof that Heaven was on their Side? Nor were these the Weak and the Ignorant, Women and Children only, which yet were a sufficient Demonstration of an heavenly Influence; but the Great and the † Learned, Persons of the greatest human Accomplishments sacrificed their Lives, equally with the Rest, to the Faith, and were those who of all others most exhorted Men to Martyrdom. The Consequence of which was, the World, no longer able to hold out against such irresistible Evidence, was converted, and Christianity triumphed by Sufferings. And what is another signal Instance of a Providence superintending it, to remove all Suspicion of human Means

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\* See Bishop Smallbrook's Answer to Mr. Woolston, also Mr. Stevenson's Conference, Mr. Lardner's Defence, &c.

† We see among the first Converts to Christianity Persons of as great Qualifications both for Wit, Learning, and Dignity, as any the World has produced a great many of which, equally with those of less Distinction, as it fell to their Lot, underwent the horribest of Tortures, and crowned their Confession and Sufferings with Martyrdom: A most pregnant Evidence that so many Persons of different Ranks, Interests, and Capacities, of different Times and Places, cou'd neither be deceiv'd nor taken with a Phrenzy, which we must suppose them to be, if they were not as well assured of the Truth of that they suffer'd for, as the wisest of Mankind can be now of any Thing in Life.



in the Propagation of the Christian Religion, it was under a continual State of Persecution, with some small Intermiſſions, there being not one Christian Emperor or mighty Potentate who espoused it's Interests, 'till the World had spent and tired out it's Malice upon it, and with Astonishment saw itself entirely become Christian.

I would also recommend to the Reader's Consideration, the terrible End of all the most virulent Persecutors of the Church under both the Jewish and Christian Dispensation, and let him tell me whether this could be merely the Work of Chance, or the ordinary Occurrence of the World.

Now let Mr. *Woolston* or any of his Disciples give some more probable Account of these Things, and convict the noble Army of Martyrs of Madness, and almost the whole World of Folly in embracing what their envenomed Malice once so much persecuted; or—

I have thus given the Grounds and Reasons upon which I believe the Christian Religion, which I think is upon an equal Foundation of Evidence, viz. that of the Senses, with natural Religion, and therefore when the Deists wou'd take away one, it's likely they wou'd leave us but little of the other. Nay, I think it demonstrable that the revealed Religion, as to it's divine Promulgation, and consequently in it's Obligation, is in several Respects the more evident of the two. Besides, to form ones Conduct upon, the other is more for Philosophers than common Capacities, especially in the present depraved State of human Nature; and to suppose God never gave the World any other to walk by, is to suppose him obliged to keep Mankind from falling under any great Depravation of Reason and natural Light, or that Mankind never suffer'd any Corruption in that Regard, nor fell into any Decay in their Understandings and intellectual Faculties; the first of which is absurd,



furd, and the latter manifestly false. But to omit the Bulk of Mankind as unqualify'd to square their Lives by natural Religion solely; how well even Philosophers hit on it, before they were better taught by the Christian Religion, their eternal Dissentions and Absurdities speak aloud. Let then these Babblers be silent, and be thankful for the Lights they have received from Christianity, without which, their natural Lights had been but so much Darkness. In Sum, natural Religion is but a Handmaid to the revealed, and the best Use we can make of Reason, is to serve ourselves of it for a Guide and Introducer to Revelation, and there let it stop.

WE have here seen the most Fundamental Proofs of the Verity of our Faith, which we presume are fully sufficient to establish any reasonable Man in the Belief of the Christian Religion. \* For the Underparts, which are all co-essential to the whole, these are copiously discussed and vindicated in larger Tracts, which purposely handle this Subject, and have cleared up all the Difficulties, and refuted the little Cavils raised against this noble Structure and System of Religion by such narrow Spirits, who, like a Fly upon a vast Pile of Building, whose Prospect perhaps extends not above two or three Inches round her, quarrel with this Joint or that Moulding, and triflingly mistake the exact Fitness for Faults, where had they the Capacity to comprehend the whole Fabrick, they wou'd have discover'd a wonderful Symmetry.

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\* It may not be amiss to observe that the Causes of Unbelief are not so much the want of Evidence for the Truth of Christianity, as the Passions and Vices of Mankind, at the Root of which this Religion strikes without Reserve: In order therefore to remove their Prejudices and to prepare Men for a candid and sincere Examination of revealed Truths, I know no Books so worthy of the most serious Perusal as the present Bishop of London's three Pastoral Letters. Not to be suspected of Partiality, let me add Mr. Le Clerc's little Treatise of the Causes of Incredulity, which the English Reader will find translated for him.

I will now take my leave of this Subject by occurring to some of the chief Objections, which may seem to affect the main Point. Since we have shewn the Scriptures to be the Word of God, nothing can be objected with any Colour to the Accomplishment of the ancient Prophecies in Jesus Christ as the Messiah, unless it be the Obscurity of the Prophetic Language, the Uncertainty of the true and genuine Text, and the imperfect Understanding of the Hebrew Tongue, after it became a dead Language.

BUT first, the Stile of the ancient Prophets is very well known to be Figurative and thick set with Metaphor, according to the Genius of the Oriental Tongues, and the loftier Conceptions of those warmer Wits of an heated Imagination, who may be supposed to be carried beyond themselves by the Influx of the Spirit, when it presented to their View the future Glories of Christ's Spiritual Kingdom; so that to give their Ideas in the Language of Men, they were forc'd to borrow the most swelling Images that human Grandeur cou'd afford. The Jews knew well enough how to interpret these Expressions, I mean those of better Minds among them; those of grosser Expectations wilfully mistook the Text, because they wou'd have a temporal Prince: And indeed Jesus might have been made one by human Means, if he wou'd have yielded to their Importunities. An abundant Demonstration this, that he was the true Prince of Peace, and that, as he said, his Kingdom was not, nor was intended to be, of this World.

BUT there wanted not plain Characters of a suffering Jesus, and exact Delineations of our blessed Lord among the Prophets, when they gave a cooler Description of his Kingdom, and painted him out as *a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief*. This Change of Stile was a kind of *Targum* or Exposition of

of the Prophetical Language. And can we think the Jewish Nation in general, especially their learned Doctors, of such slow or wayward Apprehensions, as not to understand their own Prophets in their own Language (or but a small Variation from it) with an Exaration as plain as possible, or was consistent with the Nature of such Prophecies! This is so evident, that some of their Rabbins knew no other Way of evading the Force of this Eviction, than by forging and spreading that absurd Opinion, that the Prophets foretold two Messiah's, the one to be a Temporal and triumphant Monarch, the other a suffering and persecuted Person. So much strain'd are they to escape the Cogency of the Evidences that depose in Favour of our Saviour, which is much the same with their Manner of accounting for our Lord's Miracles, which, when they cou'd not deny, they attributed them to Magic and the Virtue of the *Tetragrammaton*, which they blasphemously pretend he stole out of the Temple. But this malicious Fiction, when one examines how this magical Name was preserved from Solomon's Time, what Miracles had ever been wrought with it, and much more of the same Bran, is so extravagantly ridiculous, that it cou'd impose upon none but Jews; who after they had resisted the true Miracles of the Saviour of the World, were given over to such a strange Delusion of Heart, as to follow the lying Wonders of every Impostor that offer'd: Which affords us another incontestable Proof, that the Jewish Nation were under a general Expectation of the promised Messiah about that very Time when the true *Schiloh* came.

By the Way, I wou'd beg leave to observe that this double Character of the Messiah given by the Prophets, of which the Jews make two Persons, may, in my Opinion, admit of a more easy Solution than I have hitherto met with. Why may not the one Part refer to his Humiliation and Sufferings, the other to



his Exaltation and Triumph at the Coming in of the *Fulness of the Gentiles*, and general Conversion of the *Jews*, when according to their Expectations, and the common Tradition of the Rabbins, not wholly to be rejected, his Kingdom shall begin at *Jerusalem* in a literal Sense, where he will give some especial Tokens of his Presence, if not personal, at least influential and very illustrious? But I shall not give more Arguments at this Time for this Opinion, tho' I believe it might be very well supported.

SECONDLY, in regard to the Uncertainty of the true and genuine Text, we may observe; first, the Jews were never taxed with corrupting it, they being careful above all Things to observe the Integrity of that. They have indeed made some little Alterations, in Hatred to the Christian Exposition; or rather of two Readings, chose the most opposite to us; but those are inconsiderable, all manifest and easily rectify'd. Before the Coming of Christ they were never guilty of one wilful Corruption. Secondly, they never accused the Christians of corrupting the Text; nor could they do it to any Effect, there being always Copies among the Jews, which wou'd have detected any such Fraud. In a Word, the true Sense of Scripture is sufficiently clear, nor can any Wranglings and Disputes concerning the Vowel-Points, and Readings, and other Niceties make any material Difference as to the Prophecies, or any Matter of Doctrine. As for the genuine Text, that may be made out by comparing the *Hebrew* and *Septuagint*, and the other Eastern Versions, which are often the best Comments on the Text, whilst they establish the Sense and Reading, and shew a greater Harmony between the *Hebrew* and *Septuagint* than may at first Sight appear. By these Assistances I believe the *Hebrew* and *Greek* Texts may be restored to their Purity, and all or most of their material Differences fully reconciled. Lastly, the *Chaldee* Paraphrasts are a standing Evidence



of the Jews for the Christian Sense, and entirely preclude all Subterfuge and Evasion.

THE Scriptures and their Authenticity admitted, it is unnecessary to answer the Cavils of the Deists, why the Messias was born in such a Corner of the World as *Judea*; why he came so late into the World, &c. The Reasons of which in a human regard, are very obvious, whereof the Reader may more particularly be satisfied in the most learned Dr. Bentley's Sermon on Divine Revelation and the Messias, added to his incomparable Sermons at Boyle's Lecture. Other References are needless.

BUT, in passing, to relieve the Reader from any Difficulty he may here conceive greater than what has any real Foundation, it must be observed, that besides as by the Concession of all rational Men, God will require no more of any People than according to the Light and Knowledge he gave them; both before and after the Flood 'till the Coming of Christ, the World had sufficient Means of knowing the common Way of Salvation according to the Scripture-Revelation; had they made the best Use of their Opportunities, which fully appears from the Notice most of the oldest Heathen Historians have taken of the principal Occurrences related in the Jewish History. (An unanswerable Argument for the Truth of our Scriptures) So that the Scripture-Revelation was not so private a History and so unfit for the End design'd; an universal Directory to Mankind, as the Deists either ignorantly or maliciously object. What then shall we think of those boasted Heathen Philosophers, in quality of Guides to other Men in the Search of Truth, when nothing but Pride and the most obstinate Prejudice cou'd have made them shut their Eyes against the Light

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\* The Mosaic Law was not indeed intended for the World in general; it had several Peculiarities to which Proselytes were not obliged to submit; So that there was sufficient Provision in it for all others beside the Stock of Abraham.

of the true Religion? I will instance but in two, and those sufficiently illustrious to form a Judgment of the rest. They are *Aristotle* and *Cicero*. The first conversed with a learned Jew, of whom he gives high Commendations; and according to some, he died with great Fear and Repentance for not following the Light offered him. The other says he was well acquainted with the Jewish Institutes: How then shall we excuse a Person of his Capacity and Authority, who made no better Use of it, when he might have done it to the Salvation of himself and Millions of others? This puts me under a Necessity, which may seem Rudeness to so polite a Man, either to impeach him of a direct and willful Falshood, or to pronounce him a Person not duly qualified for a Searcher after Truth. I will not therefore peremptorily with *Erasmus* place him in the Regions of Happiness. But the Occasion of this Digression would furnish Matter for a Volume. \*

WE have thus seen the Establishment of Christ's Kingdom, which, though not of this World, yet drew all the World after it, even when the Monarch was no longer visible upon Earth; yet retiring he conquered, and when he was ascended to the Father, He, according to the Letter, as he had said, drew all Men unto him. What cou'd be a greater Demonstration that this was really the Kingdom of Heaven, that Christ reigned over the Hearts of Men, and that he turneth them whithersoever he will? In Case his Miracles, when he was upon Earth, had been contested, here is an incontestable Proof of Fact, which the whole World was Witness of. And yet both Jews and Gentiles confessed the Truth of his Miracles, tho' they egregiously stumbled in assigning the Cause.

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\* The Reader may see more of this in a Discourse of *Franzius* on the universal Call of Mankind in the Old Testament. Since the Writing of this, I have the Opportunity of referring to Dr. *Waterland's* Charge deliver'd to the Clergy of *Middlesex*, wherein abundant Testimonies in favour of this Proposition are collected from the Ancients.

BUT what shall we say of Christ's giving the same miraculous Powers to his Disciples, and almost all Christians in the first Ages of the Church? This was notorious and confessed by all. Even the Oracles themselves owned the superior Power of the Christians; and their Inability of giving Answers for the Future. Every Body knows that *Tertullian* and the primitive Fathers challenged the Heathens that they wou'd undertake to make their Gods confess themselves to be Demons and evil Spirits, and to silence them for the Time to come. Is not this an insuperable Evidence for the Truth of the Religion they professed, and of it's Prevalence over the Powers of Darkness, who fled before it where-ever it came; nay, had not the Courage to stand it out against the most illiterate Christian in the primitive Times?

AND that it may not be suspected that the Christians took care to suppress the Writings of the Heathens in answer to any of these Facts, without Confutation (as some ignorantly and idly object) lest they shou'd come down to Posterity; every Man of but a moderate Reading about these Matters knows that their main Objections are preserved and answered by the primitive Writers of the Church. And can any one be so Brainless to think these Men of incomparable Wit and Learning wou'd pretermitt what these Novices will suppose to have pinched them the most, and make a trifling Answer to the most trifling of their Adversaries Arguments? Ridiculous Supposition! This is to imagine the primitive Writers to have had as little Sense as our modern Infidels, who expose themselves and their Cause the more by defending it! Besides, 'tis well known, that the Christians were so far from endeavouring to abolish the Heathen Writings of this Kind, that they were a long Time only to be found among them, after the Heathens were ashamed of, and had forgotten them; 'till after all their Virulence



lence was spent, having survived the Religion for which they were written, they were at last commanded to be destroyed by an Edict from the Emperor *Theodosius*.

I hope I have, as clearly as my prescribed Limits will permit, removed all Cause of Suspicion of any Frauds in the Establishment of our Holy Religion, the Truth of which, when examined, speaks for itself beyond all Contradiction; therefore to advance such Cavils as these for capital Objections, is a crying Instance of what refractory Minds will do, rather than submit to an unwelcome Truth. If they will not be convinced by the clearest Inferences of Reason, and the most undeniable Depositions of Fact, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the Dead. \* The Conversion of such pertinacious Gainsayers is therefore not to be expected without a Miracle of Grace, and that as little to be look'd for; for it is not probable, or in the least agreeable to the Goodness, tho' infinite, of an all-gracious God who has condescended so low in favour of Mankind, that he shou'd vouchsafe such Men any super-natural Means of Conviction, who don't seem to deserve it more than other People, if so much, and who have so far provok'd him in re-  
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\* It may seem a very great Paradox what our Saviour pronounces upon Infidels, that if they will not hear Moses and the Prophets, if they will not be convinced by the ordinary Means of Revelation, neither will they be persuaded, tho' one rise from the Dead. But there are so many Requisites to a Conviction by this last Means, that it is a great Chance indeed but it wou'd prove ineffectual. If such Things hapned ordinarily, they wou'd be as little regarded as the Weekly Lectures and Admonitions of our Preachers; for how many much stranger Things than the Apparition of Spirits do we overlook every Day from their Frequency and Commonness? Yet these urge our Conviction more forcibly as well as more lastingly than wou'd a Remonstrance from the Dead. If they happen but seldom, the Confirmation they wou'd put us in wou'd suffer us to reap but little Instruction from such surprizing Teachers, and then upon Recovery of ourselves, how apt shou'd we be to give it all up for Dream and Delusion, and to laugh ourselves out of the *revelation*? This, were there none else, is a very great Obstruction to any Commerce between the Dead and the Living, and it is not impossible that we may sometimes thus defeat the real Communications of Spiritual Beings in a Dream or a Slumber: I say it is not impossible. But for any frequent or more immediate Inter-course of this kind, we must conclude with all the Leaped of the Fathers, that it is not fitting there shou'd be such, for it wou'd be the Cause of innumerable Errors, the Devil under that Cover taking the Opportunity of seducing the World by new Revelations and Notices of his own.



jecting the ordinary Methods of his Dispensation, which right Reason can never quarrel with. Besides, 'tis contrary to his Design in placing us in this World as in a State of Trial; and when we have all reasonable Foundation for our Faith, (for in this Case there must be some Objects of Faith, some Things above our present Comprehension as to their Manner of Existence, tho' we have a perfect Assurance, that they do exist: This is the Nature of Divine Faith, without which Religion loses it's very Essence.) In this View, where wou'd be the Merit of our Belief, if God must be obliged to interfere with natural Means in every Generation of Men, or as often as a Spirit of Infidelity shall think fit to demand it?

OUR Principles being established, it must be allowed to be highly unreasonable to cavil at any Difficulties that may attend our *Credenda* or Articles of Belief, when we have proved them to be the revealed Will of God. To do that, is to measure infinite Wisdom by the finite and short Line of human Understanding. How imperfect is our Knowledge at best of all Things about us; and shall we quarrel like Children, with Things above our Reach, only because they are so! Shall we deny ourselves the Benefit of the Sun, and Moon, and Stars, because there are Disputes about the several Systems? And is it not just as reasonable to reject the Advantages of Revelation because of some Difficulties above our feeble and narrow Comprehension? If we cou'd have adequate Idea's of all the Things proposed to our Belief, they wou'd be no longer Matters of Faith, but Knowledge and Evidence itself. But this is inconsistent with the Design of Religion, which gives us the most clear and rational Grounds of Faith, and shall we not venture to trust God for the rest? It is also incompatible with our human Capacities, for it is impossible to bring down all the Objects of Religion, which are Heavenly, to a Level with our Apprehensions on Earth; to resolve and clear

clear up such exalted Theories will be reserved for our State of Glory and Perfection. God, no doubt, has wise Views in all he does, and whatever he reveals must be eternal Truth. It becomes us then, weak and dependent Creatures, to believe and admire in Silence. And what shall we gain by Infidelity? Any Ease of our Doubts? No such Thing. Let our Adversaries propose a System free from Difficulties than that of revealed Religion, and we will embrace it. But if all the Difficulties of Revelation come infinitely short of the Mysteries and Absurdities of Atheism and Unbelief, let us rest where we are, if we are wise.

I will now mention but one of those supposed inconceivable Articles of our Faith, which, as it is perhaps the most difficult, if I prove it to be agreeable to the Sentiments of the wisest in all Ages, and to the Principles of natural Philosophy, those mighty Infidel Wits of Yesterday will gain but little Credit in contradicting it; and we will take the Rest for granted. The Resurrection of the Dead is a stumbling-stone, against which these Men will be always dashing their Foot. What? our Bodies putrified, eaten of Worms, &c. reduced to Ashes, and passed into a Thousand different Forms, shall these rise again? Impossible! Here it's disputed what God *can* do, when the Question is what he *will* do. That he will do it, he has expressly declared, and this ought to suffice us. But we may go further, and see the Reason of it. God will do it, because he has joined Body and Soul together, has made them Co-partners in the Good and Evil of Life, has given them the same Laws, and they mutually contribute to each others Happiness or Misery. Now with what Justice can they be separated in another Life? If the Soul only shall be rewarded or punished, it is Injustice; because this is a partial Retribution; 'tis not the whole Man that is recompensed, and the Body was a Party  
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and Co-efficient to all the Good and Evil done in Life: The same Body must therefore be raised again, that one and the same Man, both in Body and Soul, may receive his full Recompence. Again, in order to Man's Salvation, the Son of God took upon him our Flesh; but why did he assume a mortal Body, if he only intended to save the Soul? He that made the whole Man, wou'd have the whole Man be saved.

BUT to show that such a Restitution, as this is no way repugnant to Nature. Does not the Grain, as St. Paul reasons, and all Sorts of Seed putrify and moulder in the Ground before they shoot up with new Life, and blossom and fructify with an additional Fecundity? From what small Principles of Vegetation grows up a large Tree or a bulky Animal? Yet as little as the naked Eye can perceive in their first *Stamina* or *originary Matter*, whether you regard the Matter or Form, or Quantity or Quality, that in any wise resembles the Thing that rises out of them, modern Discoveries have found in the Seed an Image or Representative in little of the future Offspring. Therefore with *Origen* upon the same Subject against *Celsus*, we may reasonably suppose, that as there is in every Grain of Corn a certain imperceptible Principle, the *Semen* and vegetable Source of the whole future Blade and Ear, that rises out and unfolds itself after the Corruption of the Rest of the Grain: So our present corruptible Body may be a kind of Shed or Tegument of some latent incorruptible Principle, at present not discovered by us; which, as an excellent Writer supposes, may be the present Seat of the Soul, and which at the Resurrection will expand and exert itself in it's proper Form. This as it is highly rational and agreeable to Nature, and has been the usual Similitude applied to this Occasion, as well by St. Paul as most of the ancientest Ecclesiastical Writers, and not unknown to the Jews: So it salves all or most of the Difficulties that may be urged



ged upon natural Principles against the Resurrection from several Circumstances which are not within our Compass to enumerate.

BUT to give some Instances of the Feasibleness of a Re-production of Bodies, which may be a further Illustration of this Matter; 'tis observable, that Bodies resolved into the minutest Particles, and those intermixt with the Parts of other Bodies, so that they may seem to pass into another Substance by incorporating with heterogenous Matter, may by Chymical Operations be reduced to their former State and Consistence. And what is more to our Purpose, even the burnt Ashes of Plants, when sown or scattered in the Earth, will re-produce fairer and larger Plants than were known before of the same Kind in the same Place. Whence appears a secret Power, or Tendency at least, in Nature, impressed on it by it's Almighty Author, of restoring Bodies to their former Condition. And how far this may be helped by it's all-wise and all-powerful Artificer, who knows all the natural Operations of it's several Agents and Patients, and can improve their Defects as he pleases, is not for us weak-sighted Mortals to determine. This we may gather from past Experiments, that there may be a great many latent Powers in Nature of re-producing Bodies, which may be reserved for future Discoveries. So that we may conclude with that incomparable Naturalist, Mr. Boyle, that *our dim Knowledge must not determine what Means, even Physical ones, the most wise Author of Nature, and absolute Governour of the World, is able to employ to bring the Resurrection to pass.* And why shou'd we doubt God Almighty's Power to restore that which is not, to what it was, who made that to be, which was not before? *He who changed Dust into a Body solely by his Will, says Damascen, who commanded a very little seminal Drop of Matter to vegetate and ripen in the Womb, and made it a diversly-shaped and organized Body, shall be not much more*



more raise again solely by his Will, That which was, and came to Dissolution?

THUS the Resurrection evidently appears to be the Will of God, and agreeable to the Principles of natural Philosophy, which are dependent on his Will, and by Consequence indisputably in his Power. To this we will add the Suffrages of the most famous Sages of old, to show the Antiquity and the Universality of this Doctrine. That the Resurrection was the establish'd Doctrine of the Jewish Rabbins, who had it from the old Testament, and perhaps more from Tradition, we have the Testimony of *Josephus* as well as *St. Luc.* They entirely come into *St. Paul's* Sentiments while he propounds and explains it. The *Talmud* is thick set with this Doctrine, from whence the *Muhammedan Corán* took it, which last was parch'd up out of the Rabbinical Writings. To come now to the ancient Heathens: *Zoroaster* taught the universal Resurrection of the Dead; *Theopompus*, *Aristotle's* Scholar did the same, whom *Aeneas Gazeus* says, none of the Ancients contradicted. \* The Stoicks believed a Future Conflagration of the World, the same as our Consummation, after which wou'd fol-

† It were easie to produce abundant Testimonies in this Matter; but I shall only observe that as this Doctrine was not clearly revealed in the O. T. the primitive World must have had it more by Tradition than from sacred Writings. And this will still hold good tho' we admit *Zoroaster* to have been Servant to the Prophet *Daniel*. That this was his Doctrine is evident from the *Zendavesta*, the *Magian* or old *Persian Bible*, written by *Zoroaster* in the old *Persia*, yet extant and in Use among the Remainder of the Sect; and it's Doctrines were the universal Religion of the Pagan World in the first Times of Idolatry. It were of little Use but to satisfy a vain Curiosity to examine the Manner how this great Catastrophe will come about. God Almighty may employ what Means he pleases, all possible Things being equally practicable to Omnipotence. But as he commonly serves himself of natural Agents in executing his great Designs, it is the Opinion of some, that this Conflagration will be brought to pass by an Eruption of the Earth's internal Fires, such as are seen in Mount *Aetna* and elsewhere. But what is most probable is, that the Earth, by the Almighty's Direction, will be thrown off her Biais, and brought so near, if not drawn into, the Sun as to be set on Fire, Examples of which we have in Comets. And this is what seems the most obvious Account of it's future Dissolution from the Nature of the Earth's Orbit, it approaching nearer to the Sun in one Part than other, which shows that it's Destruction may happen this Way, if it shall so please God.

follow the Restitution of all Things to their former State. But more Collections of this Nature are unnecessary.

To have done, superseding all intended Reflexions upon the present State of Things. If what has been represented in Vindication of the Truth of the Christian Religion in a plain, impartial, and undesigning Manner, without all Sophistication or Colouring, may have the Happiness to contribute to the Satisfaction of the Unprejudiced, or to re-call the Unsettled to a second Consideration, which has often had a very happy Effect, the Author's Design in this Discourse is fully answered, and he will not have spent some of his idle Hours in vain. However it be, he has the Comfort of endeavouring well; and tho' this (to speak like some Christians) may be in some Sense a Work of Supererogation, because not so properly a bounden Duty in the Person it comes from, 'tis hoped nevertheless that the Intention will not pass for Nothing with him that judgeth Righteously: The Love of Truth, and the Obligation to defend it, incumbent on all Men, being the first Mover, and the End of the Reward, according to that of the Apostle, *he that converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall bridle a Multitude of Sins*, being the only Encouragement to prosecute it. May the Judge of all Men give a Blessing to the Work more according to the Author's Sincerity than Capacity for handling the Subject as it deserves. And may HE, the All-gracious God, enlighten the Eyes of those that are in Error, that they may clearly apprehend the full Force of all the Depositions for Christianity, and they will of Necessity conclude, that he that rejects the present Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Religion, will not, nor wou'd have so much Reason to, be persuaded of it by an Angel from Heaven.

